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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ITEM IN THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

UNITED NATIONS INTERIM OFFICES

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in fulfilment of the Secretary-General's undertaking in document A/C.5/47/89 of 23 March 1993 to report to the General Assembly on the experience gained in the establishment and functioning of the seven United Nations interim offices, which have been set up in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. It will be recalled that in my first annual report on the work of the Organization, 1/ I expressed the intention to draw upon the experience of these interim offices in order to further the integrated approach, in the form of a unified United Nations presence at the country level, which I believe to be necessary in order to enhance the impact of the Organization and facilitate inter-agency coordination in response to countries' stated requirements and in support of national action by countries themselves.

2. This report is thus the "broad, policy-oriented report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session" referred to in paragraph 4 of the seventeenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/47/7/Add.16 of 30 March 1993). It assesses experience gained so far and sets out my current views on the path to be followed in future.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF SEVEN INTERIM OFFICES

3. The purpose of my decision in 1992 to establish United Nations interim offices in some countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and in Georgia, all of them countries in which the United Nations had not previously had field representation, was to ensure that the United Nations response to their special requirements was properly coordinated from the outset. Their

requirements included developmental assistance in transition, and all of them were new recipient countries. But they also wanted information about the manifold ways in which the United Nations could support their economic and social development and their adjustment to independence. For some of them, there was an immediate requirement for humanitarian assistance programmes. And some were involved in actual or potential conflicts in respect of which the Secretary-General had been mandated, or would soon be mandated, to play a peacemaking role. They thus provided an opportunity to devise a new model for United Nations representation at the country level in support of an integrated approach which would address, in a comprehensive way, the political, socio-economic, environmental and humanitarian dimensions of the situation in which each of these countries found itself. This approach was reported to the General Assembly in my note of 26 October 1992 (A/47/419/Add.3) and was fully consistent with the request subsequently addressed to me, in the development context, in operative paragraph 49 of Assembly resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992, in which I was requested to ensure that the operational activities for development within the United Nations system carried out in new recipient countries were undertaken, from the outset, on the basis of an integrated, unified, cost-effective and innovative approach to development cooperation and presence in the countries concerned.

4. In devising a new model for United Nations representation in these countries, it was not my intention to disturb or replace existing mechanisms for coordination. On the contrary, the intention was, and is, to build on what has already been achieved, extending it to encompass United Nations activities not yet covered by it, and thus to provide a more comprehensive and unified United Nations presence in the countries concerned.

5. The principal existing mechanism is that of the resident coordinator for the operational activities for development of the United Nations system, provided for in General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977. In its resolution 47/199, the Assembly requested me to strengthen the resident coordinator system and specified a number of ways in which this should be done. In particular, the resident coordinator was entrusted with leadership in the provision of assistance by the United Nations system to countries that decided to formulate a country strategy note. One of the principles adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 had also provided that the resident coordinator should normally be responsible for coordinating the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system at the country level in complex emergencies requiring a coordinated response. (In its resolution 47/168 of 22 December 1992, the Assembly requested me to review the effectiveness and achievement of this arrangement, among others.)

6. Given the dominant position of development in most countries where the Organization undertakes operational activities and given the responsibilities assigned by the General Assembly to the resident coordinator in respect of both development and humanitarian assistance, I worked from the beginning on the assumption that in almost all cases the same person would serve as both United Nations representative and resident coordinator and that that person would normally be the resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Where developmental or humanitarian activities were concerned, the relationship between the United Nations representative and the representative of the various United Nations programmes, funds and offices

working out of the interim office would thus, in almost all cases, be governed by the provisions of resolution 47/199 and other resolutions which define the responsibilities of the resident coordinator, including resolution 46/182 with respect to humanitarian assistance.

7. However - and this was the innovative aspect of the approach - the United Nations representative would also have coordination responsibilities in addition to those which he/she would exercise in his/her capacity as resident coordinator in the developmental and humanitarian fields. These additional responsibilities would include the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities in so far as they were not already within the purview of the resident coordinator in accordance with resolution 46/182. They would also include activities related to public information, human rights and support for the Secretary-General in cases where, with the consent of the Government concerned, the General Assembly or the Security Council had mandated him to undertake preventive diplomacy or peacemaking functions.

8. It was because of this overall coordination role of the United Nations representative that from the beginning I made it clear that if any United Nations programme, fund or office wished to establish a field presence in countries where a United Nations integrated office already existed, I would expect its representative to become part of that office. I also expressed the hope that the specialized agencies would choose to be represented in these offices. At the same time, I made clear that the additional coordination responsibilities of the United Nations representative, like those of the resident coordinator, were, in consonance with operative paragraph 38 (c) of resolution 47/199, without prejudice to the separate identities and, where appropriate, representation of the various United Nations bodies undertaking field activities in the country concerned.

9. These considerations, together with the conclusions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) at its first regular session in 1992 on the role of the United Nations in the CIS countries (see A/C.5/47/89, paras. 4-7), have guided my efforts to establish integrated United Nations offices in the seven countries already mentioned. My proposals in this sense were welcomed by the Governments concerned, and the necessary host country agreements were concluded. I entrusted the task of establishing these offices to UNDP and the Department of Public Information. Given the somewhat experimental nature of the exercise and the lack of provision in the regular budget for the 1992-1993 biennium for the United Nations share of the costs, I referred to these integrated offices as "interim offices". The first interim office opened in Belarus on 8 September 1992, and the rest quickly followed, culminating in the opening of the office in Uzbekistan on 1 February 1993. Four of the offices are currently headed by staff members of UNDP and three by staff members of the United Nations Secretariat.

10. Since their establishment, the interim offices have played an effective role in responding to the immediate needs of their host Governments, both in developmental activities and in supporting the transition through which the countries concerned are moving. They have made available quick impact and short-term advisory services in order to provide strategic advice on training in social and economic areas of critical importance for societies in transition. They have facilitated dialogue between national institutions in the recipient

countries and the relevant United Nations bodies in order to formulate and implement integrated technical cooperation programmes which concentrate on priority areas and address specific issues in which the United Nations has a comparative advantage.

11. The interim offices have also played a role in facilitating the Organization's humanitarian and emergency relief activities in the countries concerned. These include emergency assistance after severe floods in Kazakhstan and support for a senior delegation of United Nations officials which visited Ukraine and other countries affected by the Chernobyl disaster. The offices have also assisted in the preparation and coordination of humanitarian assistance programmes in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

12. The heads of the interim offices, in their capacity as United Nations representatives, have acted as direct channels of communication between senior personalities in the host Governments and various programmes, funds and offices of the United Nations when the host countries required information about the support available to them from the United Nations and when they needed to communicate with the Organization on a variety of matters arising from their independence. In those countries where the Secretary-General has been given a mandate to help resolve actual or potential conflicts, the interim offices have also been of great value as a channel of communication between the Secretary-General and the Governments concerned and as a source of information to be incorporated into reports requested of the Secretary-General by the Security Council.

13. In all these activities, the interim offices have succeeded in strengthening the image of the United Nations as an integrated system whose component parts are able to work together, in support of host Governments, in response to the special and urgent requirements of countries in transition. It is to the credit of the United Nations representatives and all those who have worked within the framework of the interim offices that these results have been achieved despite the inevitable start-up problems that were encountered in establishing a new form of United Nations representation in countries where the Organization had not previously been represented.

14. In March 1993, I decided to establish a task force, which would include representatives of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as the relevant departments of the United Nations Secretariat. Its mandate was to work out solutions to certain immediate operational difficulties that had arisen and to advise me on the broader policy issues. The work of the task force has clarified the concept of a unified presence at the country level, on the basis of the ideas described in part II of this report.

III. THE PRESENT CONCEPT OF INTERIM OFFICES

15. The present concept, as it has evolved, can be summarized in the following way:

(a) The interim office provides a framework, if possible on common premises, within which the United Nations and its programmes, funds and offices (usually UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, but also the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) if they are active in the country concerned) carry out their mandated activities in the country concerned;

(b) The interim office is headed by a United Nations representative, who is appointed by the Secretary-General after consultation with the Heads of the programmes, funds and offices concerned;

(c) The legal status and the overall relationship of the office with the receiving State is governed by an agreement prepared and negotiated by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs;

(d) The United Nations representative normally (and, to date, invariably) is appointed also as resident coordinator of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system (following the normal inter-agency consultations) and performs the functions laid down by the General Assembly in resolution 47/199 and other resolutions that define the responsibilities of the resident coordinator;

(e) Where developmental or humanitarian activities are concerned, the relationship between the United Nations representative (assuming that he/she is also resident coordinator) and the representatives of the various United Nations programmes, funds and offices working out of the interim office is governed by the provisions of resolution 47/199 and other relevant resolutions, including resolution 46/182 with respect to humanitarian assistance;

(f) In respect of all other activities, the representatives of the various United Nations programmes, funds and offices working out of the interim office keep the United Nations representative fully informed about their activities so that he/she can exercise the necessary coordinating function;

(g) If difficulties arise within the office that the United Nations representative is unable to resolve locally, he/she refers them to the headquarters of the United Nations programmes, funds and offices concerned, so that a solution acceptable to all can be found;

(h) Subject to paragraphs 15 (c), (e) and (f) above, each United Nations programme, fund or office represented in the interim office, reports directly to, and receives instructions directly from, its head office and negotiates and agrees on its activities directly with the Government, in accordance with its mandate;

(i) For the latter purpose, the agreement referred to in paragraph 15 (c) above includes provision for each United Nations agency, programme, fund or office to conclude with the host Government a supplementary agreement concerning the conditions for cooperation and assistance in agreed projects within its mandate;

(j) Administration of the offices is entrusted to UNDP. Experience gained through mechanisms of the Joint Consultative Group on Policies and duty stations

where common premises/services are already operational is the basis for defining commonalities and establishing cost-sharing arrangements by mutual agreement between the United Nations, its programmes, funds and offices.

IV. FUTURE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

16. There are four broad sets of reasons why I believe it important to make further progress in establishing a more unified United Nations presence at the country level.

17. The first set of reasons derives from my conviction that the principal duty of the United Nations is to devise and apply an integrated approach to human security in all its aspects, in which each functional element of the world Organization plays its own indispensable role in a coordinated, common endeavour of the Organization as a whole. This vision requires coordination, not only between the headquarters of United Nations bodies, but also between their representatives at the country level. As stated above, mechanisms exist for such coordination. My purpose is to build on what has already been achieved in order to enhance further the effectiveness of the efforts of the Organization in all their diversity.

18. Secondly, it is necessary to facilitate access to the United Nations system for Member States who wish to seek its assistance in various areas of activity. This need exists especially in the case of newly independent States and other States in transition, which can find themselves faced with unexpected new challenges and may require advice on how the system as a whole can help them. The designation of a single official as United Nations representative, heading a United Nations office which provides a framework for all United Nations activities in the country concerned, is an effective way of meeting this requirement, without prejudice to the establishment of direct contacts between the Government and the representatives of the United Nations programmes, funds and offices, which it judges best able to provide the services it needs.

19. Thirdly, there is the need, at the country level as elsewhere, to rationalize the work of the Organization, to avoid duplication and to achieve economies of scale. As regards common premises, this need has been recognized since 1989, when, in its resolution 44/211 of 22 December 1989, the General Assembly requested all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to make, without delay, the necessary arrangements, in cooperation with host Governments and without additional cost to developing countries, to establish common premises at the country level. The establishment of a unified United Nations presence in the field in an integrated office is a further means of improving cost-effectiveness and enhancing the cohesion of the Organization's common endeavours.

20. Fourthly, it is necessary to improve the image of the United Nations system as an Organization which is able to work harmoniously and in a properly coordinated way to provide its Member States with the services they need. In spite of existing mechanisms for coordination, the United Nations presence at the country level is often perceived as falling short of this objective. Those perceptions must be corrected; the establishment of a unified presence at the country level is a means of doing so. In some countries a step in this

direction has already been taken by integrating United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices, as described in my report of 10 March 1993 (A/AC.198/1993/7).

21. Although none of the interim offices has yet been in existence for a year, I am encouraged to believe that this approach can be an effective way of responding to the above requirements. I have accordingly decided, at the request of the Government concerned, to apply this unified approach to United Nations representation in the Russian Federation. The necessary host country agreement has been concluded with the Government of the Russian Federation and action is in hand for the early opening of the integrated office in Moscow. The Government of Eritrea has welcomed my proposal that the United Nations premises at Asmara should be unified in an integrated office, and the host country agreement is currently under negotiation. It would be my intention to establish other such offices in cases where, having consulted the other United Nations bodies concerned, I feel that this would be advantageous and where the host Government agrees.

22. ACC has welcomed my decision to work for a more unified United Nations presence in the field. The representatives of specialized agencies do not yet form part of any of the interim offices, though one of them has indicated that it may wish to be associated with the integrated office to be established at Asmara. But those of them that are engaged in operational activities for development already fall within the resident coordinator system. For that reason, and guided by the arguments in paragraphs 16 to 20 above in favour of a unified presence at the country level, I have from the outset expressed the hope that the specialized agencies would choose to be represented in the new offices, and I have directed that the initial arrangements should be designed in such a way as to facilitate their future presence.

23. I have also given thought to the modalities for the selection of United Nations representatives. In this connection, I have been guided, to the largest extent possible, by the provisions of resolution 47/199, in which I was requested to strengthen the resident coordinator system, inter alia, by widening the pool of qualified development professionals eligible for appointment as UNDP resident representatives/resident coordinators to include the members of the Joint Consultative Group on Policies, together with increased transparency in the selection process. Clearly, the officials to be entrusted with the position of United Nations representative should be those whose presence as representatives of their organizations in the country concerned is required anyway to carry out the different activities mandated by the United Nations. In other words, they should not constitute "an additional bureaucratic layer". Therefore, in making selections for these positions I intend to draw primarily from these representatives.

V. CONCLUSION

24. This report has described my efforts during the last 18 months to establish in certain countries a unified presence of the United Nations in support of an integrated approach to the provision of the services which those countries require from the Organization. Experience during this period has made it possible to formulate for these countries an approach to United Nations

representation at the country level which achieves that objective and which has been welcomed by the Governments concerned. As indicated above, the existing interim offices already have important achievements to their credit. They have permitted a well-coordinated United Nations response to the new recipient countries' needs for various kinds of support from the United Nations. I accordingly propose that the seven existing interim offices, together with those which are being established at Asmara and in Moscow, be confirmed in existence by the General Assembly, at which point it would be my intention to change the title of those offices to "United Nations integrated offices". Proposals for financing the offices beyond the end of the current year are contained in the programme budget which I am submitting for the 1994-1995 biennium.

25. For the future, I believe that the approach that is evolving in the seven countries where interim offices were established during 1992-1993 should be kept in mind for application in other countries where similar requirements may occur in future. It remains my intention to continue to build on existing coordination mechanisms to develop a more unified United Nations presence at the country level and I shall keep this matter under regular review.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 1 (A/47/1), para. 29.